

THE ADVENT

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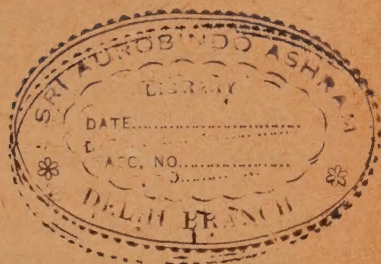
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Do not think yourself big or small, very important
or very unimportant; for we are nothing in ourselves. We
must only will to become what the Divine wills of us.

THE MOTHER



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The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - Sri Aurobindo.

EDITORIALS*

BUDDHA & SHANKARA

(I)

TO escape from life is a teaching based on the view that life is an illusion. The teaching began with Buddha. Buddha said that life or existence is the fruit of desire and that there was only one way of getting out of the misery, namely, to go out of existence. Shankara continued in that line. He added, however, that existence was not merely the fruit of desire, but that it was altogether an illusion and that so long as one lives in that illusion, one cannot realise the Divine. For him the Divine—the Supreme Divine—did not exist. I believe his view was something to that effect. In any case, for the Buddha there was no God.

Both of them came in contact with something true and real. Buddha had surely an inner contact with something which, in relation to the outer life, appeared to him as non-existence and in this non-existence all the

* Based upon the Mother's Talks.

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consequences of existence disappeared. There is indeed such a state. And it is said that if you remain in that state for more than twenty days, you are sure to lose your body. I believe it is so, if the condition becomes exclusive. But also it can be an experience that remains behind, exists in a conscious way and yet not exclusively. In other words, the contact with the world and the outer consciousness is maintained and supported by something which is independent of them and free. It is a state in which you can make truly a great progress in your external consciousness; for then you can detach yourself from everything and act without attachment, without preference, in an inner freedom that expresses itself in the outer life. Once you have attained the inner freedom, this conscious contact with the eternal and the infinite, you must return to action without losing that consciousness and allow it to influence the whole of the consciousness turned to action.

That is what Sri Aurobindo calls bringing down the Force from above. That way lies the only chance of changing the world; for you seek there a new Force, a new domain, a new consciousness and you put that in contact with the external world. Its presence and its action will bring changes inevitably, a total transformation, we hope, in the external world.

(2)

There is no doubt that Buddha had the first part of the experience; but he never thought of the second part, for it was contrary to his own theory. That theory was that one must escape. And it is obvious that there is only one way of escaping and that is to die. And yet, as he had said it himself very well, one may die and yet remain attached to life and continue to be in the cycle of rebirths without having the liberation. As a matter of fact, it is through the successive sojourns upon earth that one grows till one arrives at this liberation. For him the ideal is that where the world exists no longer. It is as if he accused God for having committed an error by creating a world and the only thing to be done is to repair the error by annulling it. Naturally, as thoroughly reasonable and logical, he did not admit the existence of God. But then by whom was the error committed? When and how did it come about? He never answered these questionings. He simply said that the world began with desire and with the end of desire it must end.

He was on the brink of saying that the world was purely subjective, that is to say, a collective illusion, and if the illusion ceased the world would also cease. But he did not go so far. It was Shankara who took up the line and completed the teaching.

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In the more ancient wisdom, however, if one goes back to the teaching of the vedic Rishis, for example, one finds no idea of escape from the world; they sought a realisation upon earth and they even conceived a golden age when this realisation would be achieved.

It is without doubt since the teaching of Buddha that the idea of escape came in; and that has gradually undermined the vitality of the country for it meant an endeavour to cut oneself away from life. The outward reality became a false illusion and one should have nothing to do with it. The natural result was that one cut oneself away from the universal energy and so vitality went on diminishing, and with diminishing vitality, all possibility of terrestrial realisation also diminished.

(3)

Some say that the Buddha was an Avatar, others say he was not.

To use the names as known in India, I think it is the Avatars of Vishnu (the aspect of the Divine that builds and preserves), who come to prove that the Divine can live upon earth; whereas, each time that Shiva has manifested (the aspect that works to transform and destroy), it was in persons who have tried to fight against illusion and demolish what existed.

I have reasons to think that the Buddha manifested something of the Shiva power. It was the same compassion and comprehension for all misery and it was the same force that destroys, evidently with the intention of transforming, but destroying more than constructing.

His work does not seem to have been very constructive indeed. It was necessary to give a practical training to man not to be egoistic. In that way it proved to be useful.

But taken in its fundamental principle it has not helped much in the transformation of earth and earthly life. It has not encouraged the descent of a higher Consciousness into earthly life; instead it has very strongly encouraged the separation of the Consciousness, which he said was the only truth, from all external expression.

And as to the existence or manifestation of the Divine upon earth, those who believed in Buddha have now made him a God. You have only to look at the Buddhist temples and all their divinities to know that human nature has always the tendency to deify what it admires.

7-9-1955

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PERSONAL EFFORT AND SURRENDER

There is no difference in the end between the two if the goal to attain is the Impersonal Divine, that is to say, if you want to unite and identify yourself with the Impersonal Divine, merge into it. But if your aspiration is to reach what is beyond, what Sri Aurobindo calls the supramental Reality, then there comes in a difference, a difference in the goal as well as in the way. For the way to the supramental realisation is essentially the way of surrender. It is a question of temperament perhaps. And if one has the temperament, the disposition, the path of surrender is infinitely more easy: three-fourths of your trouble and difficulty are got rid of automatically. But it may prove hard going for some.

Now as regards the result, in one case, I may say, it is linear, it ends at a point, as it were; in the other case, the path is spherical and ends in a totality. Each one individually can reach his origin and the optimum of his being; the origin and the optimum of one's being is the same as the Eternal, the Infinite, the Supreme. If you reach your origin, you reach the Supreme, but you reach along a single line—do not take the image literally, it is only a description to make the thing easy to understand. So it is, I say, a linear realisation terminating at a point and this point is one with the Supreme, your maximum possibility. By the other way, you arrive at, what I call, a spherical realisation; for it gives you the idea of something that contains all, it is not a point but a totality that excludes nothing.

The relation of the whole and its part does not hold good here; for there is no longer any division. The very quality of the approach is different. Can you say that a perfect identification with one drop of water would give you the knowledge of what the sea is? And here the perfect identification in question is not merely with the ocean but with all possible oceans. And yet the perfect identification with one drop of water does give you the knowledge of the ocean in its essence; but in the other way you know the ocean not merely in its essence but in its totality. It is however very difficult to express the reality of the truth. What can be said to put it as clearly as possible is this: in the line of personal effort, when one depends solely upon one's personal strength, all that has been individualised maintains the virtues of individuality and hence also, in a certain sense, all the limitations necessary for this individuality. In the other case, when you have surrendered your individuality, you not only enjoy the virtues of individuality but also you are not subject

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to its limitations. It is almost high philosophy, I am afraid. It is not clear therefore. But that is all I can say.

20-7-1955

MEAT-EATING

What happens when one eats meat?

I will tell you then a story. I knew a young woman, a Swedish, who was doing Sadhana. Normally she was a vegetarian, by habit as well as by inclination. One day she was invited to a dinner. She was given fowl to eat. She did not like to make a fuss and quietly ate her fowl. Now at night she found herself, in dream of course, in a basket and her head in between two bits of sticks and being shaken, shaken to and fro. She felt very unhappy, very miserable. And then she saw herself head down and legs up in the air and being shaken, shaken continually. She was thoroughly miserable. All on a sudden she felt she was being skinned, peeled and how painful it all was! And then some one came with a knife and cut off her head. She woke up at that. She told me the story and said she never had such a frightful nightmare in her life. She had thought nothing of this kind before going to bed; it must have been simply the consciousness of the poor chicken that entered into her and she experienced in dream all the agonies of this creature when it was being carried to the market, her feathers pulled out and in the end the head severed. That is what happens. In other words, along with the meal that you take, you absorb also, in a large or small measure, the consciousness of the animal whose flesh you swallow. Of course it is nothing serious, but it is not always pleasant. Yet obviously it does not help you to be more on the side of man than on that of the animal kind. Primitive men, we know, were much nearer the animal level and used to take raw meat: that gave them evidently more strength and energy than cooked meat. They used to kill an animal, tear it to pieces and bite into the flesh. That is how they were robust and forceful. Also it was for this reason perhaps that there was in their intestines an organ called appendix in a much bigger size than it is now: for it had to digest raw meat. As men however started cooking their food and found it more tasty that way, the organ too gradually diminished in size and fell into atrophy; now it does not serve any purpose, it is an encumbrance and often a source of illness. This means that it is

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time to change the diet and take to something less bestial. It depends, however, on the state of the consciousness of each person. An ordinary man, who leads an ordinary life, has ordinary aspirations, thinks of nothing else than earning his livelihood, keeping good health and rearing a family, need not pick and choose, except on purely hygienic grounds. He may eat meat or anything else that he considers helpful and useful, doing good to him.

But if you wish to move from the ordinary life to a higher life, the problem acquires an interest. And again, for a higher life if you wish to move up still farther and prepare yourself for transformation, then the problem becomes very important. For there are certain foods that help the body to become more refined and others that keep it down to the level of animalhood. But it is only then that the question acquires an importance, not before. Before you come to that point, you have a lot of other things to do. It is certainly better to purify your mind, purify your vital before you think of purifying your body. For even if you take all possible precautions and live physically with every care to eat only the things that help to refine the body, but the mind and the vital remain full of desire and inconstancy and obscurity and all the rest, your care will serve no purpose. Your body will become perhaps weak, disharmonious with your inner life and drop off one day.

You must begin from within. I have said a hundred times, you must begin from above. You must purify first the higher region and then purify the lower. I do not mean by this that you should give yourself up to all the licences that degrade the body. I do not mean that at all. I am not advising you not to control your desires. What I mean is this: do not try to be an angel in the body before you are already something of the kind in your mind and in your vital. For that will bring about a dislocation, a lack of balance. And I have always said that to maintain the balance, all the parts must progress together. In trying to bring light into one part you must not leave another part in darkness. You must not leave any obscure corner anywhere.

23-6-1954

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

KHALED OF THE SEA*

(An Arabian Romance)

PROLOGUE

ALNUMAN AND THE PERI

IN Bagdad by Euphrates, Asia's river,
Euphrates that through deserts must deliver
The voices which of human daybreaks are
Into the dim mysterious surge afar,
The Arabian dwelt, after long travel he
Regions deserted, wastes of silent sea
Wide Ocean ignorant of ships and lands
Never made glad by toil of mortal hands
For he had seen the Indian mountains bare
Save of hard snow and the unbreathed huge air
And swam through giant waters and had heard
In those unhuman forests beast and bird,
The peacock's cry and tiger's hoarse appeal
Calling to God for prey, marked the vast wheel
Of monstrous birds shadowing whole countries; he
From Singhal through the long infinity
Of southern floods had steered his shuddering ship
Where unknown winds their lonely tumult keep
And he had lived with strong and pitiless men,
Nations unhumanised by joy and pain,
And he had tasted grain not sown by man
And drunk strange milk in weird Mazinderan.
Silent he was, as one whom thoughts attend,

* Early writing (1899 January)

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Distant whom stiller hearts than ours befriend
He lived with memories only; no sweet voice
Made the mute echoes of his life rejoice;
No lovely face of children brought the dawn
Into his home; but silent, calm, withdrawn,
He watched the ways of men with godlike eyes
Released from trammelling affinities¹
Yet was he young and many women strove
Vainly to win his marble mind to love.
One day when wind had fled to the cool north
And the strong earth was blind with summer, forth
The Arabian rode from great Bagdad and turned
Into the desert. All around him burned
The imprisoned spirit of fire; above his head
The sky was like a tyranny outspread,
The sun a fire in those heavens, and fire
The sands beneath; the air burning desire
And breathless, a plumb weight of flame; yet rode
The Arabian unfeeling like a god.
Three hours he rode and now no more was seen
Bagdad, the imperial city, nor aught green,
But the illimitable sands around
Extend, a silent world waiting for sound,
When in the distance he descried a grace
Of motion beautiful in that dead place.
Wondering he turned, but suddenly the horse
Pricked up his slender ears, swerved from the course
And pawing stood the unwilling air, nor heard
The guiding voice nor the familiar word.
Whinnying with wrath he smote the desert sand
And mocked the rein and raged at the command.
Then raised the man his face and saw above
No cloud with the stark face of heaven strove,
A single blaze of light from pole to pole.
Smiling the Arabian spoke unto his soul.
"Here too then are you strong, O influences

¹ Large as from commerce with infinities

That trouble the earth and air and the strong seas!
 Therefore I will not stay your gathering wings
 Who watch me from the air, you living things,
 But go to find whatever peril or wonder
 Wait me of life above the earth or under.
 Strange will it be if quiet Bagdad yield
 More terror or more sweetness than in field
 Has stayed me yet or in untravelled flood
 Or mountain or the tiger-throated wood."
 So saying he grasped the strong and shaken mane
 And set swift footing on that fiery plain.
 At once the beast as if by sorcery
 Strangely compelled, calmed his impetuous eye:
 His angry tremour ceased and bounding wrath
 Following unbidden in the Arabian's path.
 But he with silent toil the sands untried
 Vanquishing through that luminous world and wide
 Went a slow shadow, till his feet untired
 The fruit of all his labour long acquired.
 Before a mile complete he was aware
 Of a strange shape of beauty sitting there
 On a sole boulder in the level wild,
 Maiden, a marvellous bloom, a naked child;
 All like a lily from her leaves escaped
 The golden summer kissed her close and wrapped
 In soft revealing sunshine, a sweet bareness,
 A creature made of flowers and choicest fairness;
 And all her limbs were like a luminous dream,
 So wonderfully white they burn and gleam,
 Her shoulder ivory richly bathed in gold,
 Her sides a snowy wonder to behold,
 Marble made amorous; her body fair
 Seemed one with the divine translucent air,
 A light within the light, a glorious treasure,
 A thing to hold, to press, to slay with pleasure.
 The girl was not alone, but with her watched
 Two shapes of beauty and of terror hatched,
 A strong, fierce snake, round her sweet middle twined,

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A tigress at her lovely feet reclined.
Dreaming on these tremulous sands she waited
And often with that splendour miscreated
Played thoughtfully; about her wondrous knees
Binding the brilliant death or would increase
The whiteness of her limbs with its fierce hues
Or twine it in her tresses flowing loose.
Below that other restless evil played
The fierce, sleek terror on the sands outspread.
First of the wonderful three rose with a bound
Waking the desert from its sleep with sound
The tigress, but the Arabian strode more near
As one who had forgotten how to fear
And frowning like a god with kingly look
He threatened the preparing death and shook
His javelin in the sun. Back crouched the fiend
Amazed nor could the steely light attend
Nor that unconquerable glance; yet lowered
To find her dreadful violence overpowered
By any smaller thing than death, and he
Heeded no more crouched limb nor stealthy eye.
He on that flowerlike shape a moment gazed
As one by strange felicity amazed,
Who long grown sorrow's friend his whole life grieves
Blest beyond expectation, scarce believes
That joy is in his heart.....

(to continue)

SRI AUROBINDO

THE IDEAL OF FORGIVENESS

IN the sky, the moon drifted slowly through the clouds. Far below, the river mingled its murmur with the wind's, as it danced along on its course; and the earth looked bathed in beauty in the half-light of the moon. All around were the forest retreats of the Rishis, each charming enough to put the Elysian fields to shame: every hermitage was a perfect picture of sylvan loveliness with its trees and flowers and foliage.

On this moon-enraptured night, said Brahmarshi (the seer who has known the Supreme) Vasishtha to his spouse Arundhati Devi, "Devi (*literally*, goddess), go and beg some salt of the Rishi Vishvāmitra, and bring it here soon."

Taken aback, she replied, "My lord, what is this you are asking me to do? I cannot understand you! He who has robbed me of my hundred sons...." She could say no more, for her voice was choked with sobs as memories of the past rose up to disturb that sweet home of serenity, her heart, and to fill it with pain to its depths. After a time she recovered her composure to continue: "All my hundred sons were learned in the Vedas and dedicated to the Divine. They would go about in moonlight such as this singing His praises, but he...he has destroyed them all. And you bid me go and beg at his door for a little salt! My lord, you bewilder me!"

Slowly the sage's face filled with light; slowly from the ocean-depths of his heart came the words, "But, Devi, I love him!"

Arundhati's bewilderment increased, and she said, "If you love him you might just as well have addressed him as Brahmarshi! The whole trouble would have ended there, and I should have had my hundred sons left to me."

The Rishi's face took on a singular beauty as he said, "It was because I love him that I did not call him Brahmarshi. It was because I did not call him that, that he still has a chance of becoming a Brahmarshi."

Vishvāmitra was beside himself with rage. He could not concentrate on his *tapasyā*. He had vowed that if Vasishtha did not acknowledge him as a Brahmarshi that day, he would kill him. To carry out this resolve,

he armed himself with a sword as he left his hermitage. Slowly he came to Vasishthadeva's cottage and stood outside, listening. He heard what the great sage was saying to Devi Arundhati about him. The grip on his sword-hilt relaxed as he thought, "Heavens, what was I about to do in my ignorance! To think of trying to hurt one whose soul is so far above all pettiness!" He felt the sting of a hundred bees in his conscience, and ran forward and fell at Vasistha's feet. For a time he could not speak, but in a little while he recovered his speech and said, "Pardon me, oh pardon me! But I am unworthy even of your mercy!" He could say no more, for his pride still held him fast. But Vasishtha stretched out both arms to raise him. "Rise, Brahmarshi!" he gently said. But Vishvāmitra, in his shame and mortification, could not believe that Vasishtha meant what he said.

"Do not deride me, my lord," he cried.

"I never say what is false", replied Vasishtha. "You have become a Brahmarshi today. You have earned that status because you have shed your haughty self-conceit."

"Teach me divine lore, then," implored Vishvāmitra.

"Go to Anantadeva, he will give you what you desire," said Vasishtha.

Vishvāmitra came to where Anantadeva stood with the Earth resting on his head. "Yes, I will teach you what you want to learn. But, first, you must hold up the Earth."

Proud of his *tapasyā*-won powers, Vishvāmitra said, "Very well, relinquish your burden and let me bear it."

"Hold it then," said Anantadeva, moving away. And the Earth began to spin down and down in space.

"Here and now I give up all the fruits of my *tapasyā*," shouted Vishvāmitra, "only let the Earth not sink downwards."

"You have not done *tapasyā* enough to hold up the Earth, O Vishvāmitra", Anantadeva shouted back. "Have you ever associated with holy men? If you have, offer up the merit you have so acquired."

"For a moment only, I was with Vasishtha," answered Vishvāmitra.

"Offer up the fruits of that contact then," commanded Anantadeva.

"I do here offer them up," said Vishvāmitra. Slowly the Earth stopped sinking downwards.

"Give me divine knowledge, now," importuned Vishvāmitra.

"Fool!" exclaimed Anantadeva, "You come to me for divine knowledge, turning away from him whose momentary touch has given you virtue enough to hold up the Earth!"

THE IDEAL OF FORGIVENESS

Vishvāmitra grew angry at the thought that Vasishthadeva had played him a trick. So he hurried back to him and demanded why he had deceived him.

Unruffled, Vasishtha answered him in slow and solemn tones: "If I had given you the knowledge you asked for then, you would not have accepted it as true. Now you will have faith in me."

And so Vishvāmitra came to acquire knowledge of the Divine from Vasishtha.

Such were the saints and sages of India in the olden days, and such was their Ideal of Forgiveness. So great was the power they had acquired by their *tapasyā* that they could even carry the Earth on their shoulders. Such sages are being born in India again, today. They will dim the lustre of the Rishis of old by their radiance, and confer on India a glory greater than any she has ever known.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Translated from the original in Bengali
by Somnath Maitra).

THE MOTHER'S VICTORY

THE year 1955 has come and gone—the sombre, ominous, explosive 1955 of dark prognostications. On the evening of the last day of 1954 the Mother gave us the following New Year's Message:

“No human will can prevail against the Divine's Will. Let us put ourselves deliberately and exclusively on the side of the Divine, and the Victory is ultimately certain.”

Explaining the message, she said:

“I foresee that the coming year will be a difficult year. There will be much inner struggle and much outer struggle too. So I shall tell you of the attitude you should take in such circumstances. The difficulties may last perhaps more than the twelve months of the year, may extend to fourteen months. But I expect you never to lose hold of the attitude I am asking you to keep.

Indeed, the more things become difficult, I must say, the quieter you should remain, the more unshakable the faith you should have. This is the most important thing....”

Expatriating further, she said:

“....It is, I may say, the last hope of the hostile forces...to prevail against the present Realisation. But we have to hold firm, and if we succeed in passing through, we shall find things easier afterwards; the resistance will gradually fritter away.

The adverse forces have always tried to push back the divine Realisation as much as possible, to maintain their hold upon the world as long as possible. That struggle seems to have come to a head at last. It is their final choice....They are engaged in a tremendous battle upon this earth; for it is upon this earth that the victory has to be won, the victory that will decide the course of earth's future.”

THE MOTHER'S VICTORY

Victory can only be in a battle. What battle, then, have we to wage and win while the whole world is sick of battle and athirst for peace? What is the precise nature of the fight and of the victory the Mother speaks of in the message?

If we turn to the Mother's "Prayers and Meditations", we shall find an answer to our question. Victory, either in explicit terms or by implication, is the burden of all her Prayers. It can be said to be the very mission of her life, the one goal she has set before her, the solitary object of all her activities.

The very first mention of victory occurs in the Mother's Prayer of January 4, 1914:

"...I confide in Thee and surrender myself to Thy guidance, sure of Thy victory."

Then in the Prayer of June 19, 1914:

"Fill our hearts with the delight of Thy love.
Flood our minds with the splendour of Thy light.
Grant that we may manifest Thy Victory."

Addressing the Divine in the Prayer of June 25, 1914, she says:

"Pierce this darkness, make the light surge out;
Quiet this storm, establish peace;
Calm this violence, let love reign;
Become the warrior, the conqueror of obstacles;
Win the victory."

In more urgent and emphatic terms, she prays for victory in her Prayer of July 8, 1914:

"O Force divine, supreme illuminator, listen to our prayer, do not go far from us, do not withdraw, help us to fight the good fight, fortify our strength for the struggle, give us the power for victory."

The highest pitch of intensity in her yearning is reached and an indication of the nature of the victory is given in her Prayer of July 11, 1914:

"O Lord, use Thy omnipotence, accomplish the miracle of Thy permanent Presence....Why spare us so much? We must either triumph or perish!

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The Victory, the victory, the victory. We demand *the victory of transfiguration!*"¹

In the Mother's Prayer of September 5, 1914, the indication becomes more definite and clearer to the reader's mind, and no doubt is left as to the precise nature of the victory the Divine wills in her:

" 'Turn and face the danger,' Thou hast said to me. 'Why dost thou wish to turn thy look away or fly far from action, away from the fight, into a profound contemplation of Truth? It is its integral manifestation that has to be realised, it is its victory over all the obstacles of blind ignorance and obscure hostility. Look straight at the danger and it will vanish before the Power.'

O Lord, I have understood the weakness of this most external nature which is always ready to surrender to Matter and to escape, as a compensation, into a supreme intellectual and spiritual independence. But Thou expectest from us action, and action does not allow of such an attitude. It is not enough to triumph in the inner worlds, we must triumph even in the most material worlds. We must not run away from the difficulty or the obstacle because we have the power to do so by taking shelter in the consciousness where there are no longer any obstacles....We must look the danger straight in the face, with a faith in Thy Omnipotence, and Thy Omnipotence will triumph.

Give me integrally the heart of a fighter, O Lord, and Thy victory is sure.

'To conquer at any cost' must be the present motto. Not because we are attached to the work and its results, not because we are in need of such an action, not because we are incapable of escaping from all contingencies.

But because such is Thy command to us. But because the time has come for Thy triumph upon earth. But because Thou wiltest an integral victory.

And in an infinite love for the world...let us fight!"

In this Prayer the Mother throws considerable light on the nature of the victory she has been fighting for. The victory aimed at is the victory of Truth "over all obstacles of blind ignorance and obscure hostility." The Mother is not permitted to rest content with her triumphs in the inner

¹ Italics are mine

THE MOTHER'S VICTORY

worlds. The command of the Divine is that she must triumph even in the most material worlds. The ascetic flight from the world and its tangled difficulties is completely barred out. She is not allowed either to take shelter in the higher reaches of consciousness where there is no fight. She is asked to look the danger of the material resistance straight in the face and conquer it at any cost. With an infinite love for the world in her heart and the omnipotence of the Divine's Love in her whole being, she has to fight and fight on, till the last strongholds of the material inconscience fall to her charge and God's Love and Light, Joy and Beauty, Truth and Power take full possession of the earth.

Many more Prayers could be cited in which the Mother speaks of victory in accents of fire¹—victory of the Divine over all that veils, distorts or obstructs His Light and Force descending upon earth. Was it not of some such victory, though on a smaller, individual scale that the Vedic Rishis spoke in many a flaming hymn to Agni and Indra, Varuna and Soma?

"I meditate on Thee with a heart that does the work and, mortal, I call to the Immortal. O Will, O Knower of the Births, confirm victory in us; by the children of my works may I increase immortality."

Rig Veda.

The sole, secret purpose of the evolution of the human soul on earth is the perfect outflowing of the Divine who dwells in it. It has been given a body, life and mind, not that it may outgrow and cast them off when their primary use is over, but that it may baptise them in the fire of the Spirit and make them luminous with Its undying Light, powerful with Its invincible Force. It has to render its material body a transparent vesture of the self-revealing God, its life a creative flow of His inexhaustible Force, its mind a passive channel of His Light, and itself a radiating centre of His Love and Beauty and Joy upon earth. It has to solve the riddle of the material world, build a bridge between Matter and Spirit, and make its earthly existence aglow with its divine essence.

What has been achieved up to now in spiritual life is only a certain amount of purification of human nature, not its radical conversion and transformation. What the Vedic Rishis had begun and attempted was not

¹ "O Lord, Thou art all-powerful: become the fighter and win the Victory."—*Prayers and Meditations*—July 23, 1914

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continued and accomplished. The great Vedic venture could not mature and expand, the sublime idea of the Rishis of "a divine race upon earth" could not take firm hold of the national mind and realise itself, but was soon lost in the gathering mist of an intolerant world-negation, an anti-pragmatic, anti-social asceticism, a sick disgust of the material life. Individual souls undertook solitary flights to the Beyond; or even when there were collective efforts, the goal was the same—an escape from the world by an exclusive and impatient sannyas, and an attainment of the transcendent peace and silence, or supernal love and bliss. The secret of the transformation of the physical life and nature of man, and an unflawed revelation of God in his whole being was not conceived as a practical ideal.

It is this work of supplementing the ascent of the human soul by the descent of the supreme Light-Force, and man's dynamic realisation and expression of the Divine in his outward, active existence, that is the mission of the Mother's life, as it has been that of Sri Aurobindo. For its perfect accomplishment, it is not enough to be united with the Divine in the depths of one's heart, or on the summits of one's being. There are forces of darkness, not in the deepest and highest parts of man, but in the lowest and most external—forces that obstruct and maim his spiritual achievements in life. The subconscious and inconscient ranges of his being have hardly been explored and conquered by any of the past yogas, the sinks and sewers of his lower nature have hardly been flushed and reclaimed; and they oppose a resolute, perpetual resistance to the descent of the higher light. They have to be completely purified and conquered; their darkness has to be turned into light, their inertia into a radiant, creative dynamism, and their evil and falsehood into the supreme Good and Truth.

"All that has been conceived and realised up to now is mediocre, commonplace, insufficient, compared with what has to be. The perfections of the past have no longer any force at present. A new puissance is needed to transform the new powers and make them submit to Thy divine Will..."¹

The new Force is there, "the force which the earth does not yet know and which Thou hast given us the mission to reveal to her." It is what Sri Aurobindo calls the supreme creative Light-Force of the Vijnana, the Rita-Chit. It is by the direct working of this new supramental Force in

¹ *Prayers and Meditations*—June 17, 1914

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Matter that the malignant veto and stubborn opposition of the nether forces can be overcome, the forces themselves vanquished, converted and illumined, and a complete victory achieved upon this convulsed, sorrowful earth. It will, therefore, be a victory of the Divine, and of the Divine alone, a victory of His Truth-Consciousness and Truth-Will, in which all mankind and Nature will grow to greatness.

ब्रह्मणो वा एतद्विजये महीयध्वम्

(Of the Eternal is this victory in which ye shall grow to greatness)

Kena Upanishad.

But this victory is not a sudden triumph to be effected by a single fell stroke of spiritual power. It has been prepared by countless ages of unremitting toil, by a silent, patient, occult labour at the slimy roots of material existence, in the dumb, heaving depths of darkness which nourish the forces of Ignorance, Falsehood and Death.

“O my Lord, my sweet Master, for the accomplishment of Thy work I have sunk down into the unfathomable depths of Matter, I have touched with my finger the horror of the falsehood and the inconscience, I have reached the seat of oblivion and a supreme obscurity...”¹

The Mother has fought many a long, relentless battle in lives without number² against “the horror of the falsehood and the inconscience”, so that the long-promised Kingdom of God may at last be realised upon earth. Many and varied and dangerous have been the experiences she has had to pass through, sacrificing, whenever the exigencies of her work demanded it, her secure station in the bosom of the Divine, in order to dig deep at the “grim foundations” of the material existence, so that “from the heart of this heavy and obscure Matter”, she might let loose the volcano of the divine Love and Light. The Divine has been in her as an unfailing dynamic Presence.

“It is, Thou, O Lord, who settest all in motion from the depths of the being; it is Thy Will that directs, Thy Force that acts; and no longer on the limited field of a small individual consciousness, but on the universal field

¹ *Prayers and Meditations*—November 24, 1931

² “Since the beginning of the earth, whenever and wherever there was the possibility of manifesting a ray of Consciousness, I was there.”—THE MOTHER

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of a consciousness which, in each state of being, is united to all."¹ And the Divine Mother and the great gods have been untiring in their help and guidance.

"Our Divine Mother is with us and has promised us identification with the supreme and total Consciousness, from the unfathomable depths to the most external world of sense. And in all these domains Agni assures us of the cooperation of his purifying flame, destroying the obstacles, kindling the energies, stimulating the will, so that the realisation may be hastened. Indra is with us to perfect the illumination in our knowledge, and the divine Soma has transformed us into his infinite, sovereign, marvellous love that begets the supreme beatitude."²

What is the master weapon the Mother uses in this dreadful fight with the forces of darkness? It is the weapon of love, the Divine's Love.

"Be this love in everything and everywhere, ever more widely, ever more intensely, and the whole world will become at once thy work and thy estate, thy field of action and thy conquest. Strive with persistence to throw down the last limits which are but frail barriers before the expansion of the being, to conquer the last obscurities which the illumining power is already lighting up. Fight that thou mayst conquer and triumph; struggle to surmount all that has been up to this day, to make the new Light emerge, the new example, which the world needs. Fight stubbornly against all obstacles, outer or inner. This is the pearl without price which is proposed for thee to realise."³

"I am Thy puissant arms of mercy. I am the vast bosom of Thy limitless love....The arms have enfolded the sorrowful earth and tenderly press it to the generous heart; and slowly a kiss of supreme benediction settles on this atom in conflict: the kiss of the Mother that consoles and heals."⁴

Thus slowly, laboriously, precariously, against incalculable odds, against even the revolt and ill-will of the very men for whose redemption and perfection it is being so steadily pursued, the Mother's work has been

¹ *Prayers and Meditations*—September 17, 1914

² *Prayers and Meditations*—September 30, 1914

³ *Prayers and Meditations*—December 25, 1916

⁴ *Prayers and Meditations*—August 11, 1914

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proceeding towards the great victory of Light over darkness, of Truth over falsehood, of Bliss and Beatitude over all sorrow and suffering, of the Life Eternal over death and dissolution—the unprecedented victory of the Integral Manifestation.

The crucial year of the grim fight has come to an end and a new year has begun. Darkness is melting into the grey of the new dawn, touched with the gold of the filtering light. It recalls the Mother's Prayer of September 25, 1914:

“O Divine and adorable Mother, with Thy help what is there that is impossible? The hour of realisation is near and Thou hast assured us of Thy aid that we may accomplish integrally the divine Will.

Thou hast accepted us as fit intermediaries between the unthinkable realities and the relativities of the physical world, and Thy constant presence in our midst is a token of Thy active collaboration.

The Lord has willed and Thou dost execute:

A new light shall break upon the earth,

A new world shall be born,

And the things that were announced shall be fulfilled.”

And the promise and prophecy are on their way to fulfilment.

The present world situation is a bewildering paradox. There is a mixture of hope and despair in the torn heart of humanity. The despair is distressing and paralysing, and the hope is insistent, heartening and invigorating. They are contending for mastery over the human consciousness. The past is fast dying out, the present is in the melting pot, and the future is preparing behind the veil. Those whose vision pierces through the veil, can perceive the budding splendour of the springtide outlining itself behind the pervading blight and bleakness of the winter. They can also feel the gentle breath and hear the faint music of the spring heralding a new life for a new race of mankind.

“...the whole universe is no longer aught else than a more and more vast and harmonious chant arising to salute Thy divine Dawn.”¹

But who will fathom the divine magic that brings light out of dense darkness, and the splendour of the spring out of the dreary forlornness of the winter? Who will perceive how the beastly passions of men that have surged

¹ *Prayers and Meditations*—Sept. 25, 1914

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up to the surface of life, threatening to ravage and wreck all that centuries of culture have built up with infinite care and labour, are being dealt with more radically than ever before, their roots plucked out and their energies transmuted, illumined and harnessed to the Will and purpose of God? Who will know that "Thou hast given us an assurance which has been accompanied by the most powerful promise which Nature, the universal Consciousness, can ever make....We have, therefore, the certitude that what has to be done will be done and that our present individual being is really called upon to collaborate in this glorious victory, in this new manifestation?"¹

The victory is in sight today, however much we let ourselves be deluded by the appearances of the present. The new message that the Mother has given for the year 1956 takes the advent of the victory for granted, and inculcates the right way and condition of receiving it:

"The greatest victories are the least noisy. The manifestation of a new world is not proclaimed by beat of drum."

It is in silence and peace and tranquillity of the whole being, it is in absolute purity and humility of consciousness, it is in perfect faith and trust in the Divine and in an undeviating attitude of consecrated receptivity to His Force, that the victory has to be hailed. It has to be hailed as a gift of God, as a token of His Grace. For, noise, excitement, a vainglorious fanfare can only open the doors to the very forces of Ignorance and Falsehood over which the victory is being achieved, and retard the manifestation of the new world of Truth and harmony for which the Mother has been toiling.

And once the victory has come, there will still remain the long, uphill work of its consolidation. The first decisive victory has to be repeated and expanded in the lives of those who are dedicated to the Mother's mission, again and again, from moment to moment, individually and collectively, till a compact body of the transfigured élite of humanity is prepared to march forward as the vanguard of the supramental race.

And even when that is achieved, the Mother's work will still continue. The victory will have to be renewed and multiplied and extended till all humanity becomes a temple of the unveiled Divine and earth brims over with the nectar of heaven. That may, indeed, be the glorious consummation of the Mother's Victory.

RISHABHCHAND

¹ *Prayers and Meditations*—November 15, 1914

PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS OF CONTEMPORARY INDIA

PHILOSOPHY is the guiding light of the life of man. It is the intellectual and spiritual orientation of total existence, empirical and ultimate, we need for determining the sense and meaning of our life and its activities and give to it a direction of right growth and unfoldment. As such it must be a continually creative process, as life is. Of course, being an orientation of total reality, it will combine and reconcile the ever new, the changing, with the ever the same, the eternal. When it occupies itself rather exclusively with the one or the other aspect, then it fails to do justice to total reality, which is both.

Philosophy, as a living force of life, must, therefore, be a vigilant light, ready and anxious to discover the problems that beset life at any time and seek to solve them. This rather stresses the empirical life and its changeful pattern and, as though, ignores the eternal and abiding truth or truths. But if the unity of the two aspects or the necessity of some sort of close relationship between the two is admitted, then it will be easy to recognise that the empirical is our present status, in and through which and for which we seek the ultimate. The ultimate thus acquires a practical relationship with the empirical and will, therefore, ever need a renewed understanding, interpretation and appreciation. And it is such renewed orientation that can be a living force and contribution to the present experience. A merely reproduced view of Reality of a former day is hardly much help to the present.

Thus each generation has to make its best effort to build up its orientation of life and seek guidance from it. Today human life is increasingly becoming one in the world as a whole and to that extent the problems also tend to become the same for all peoples. But yet any people, with a history of philosophical thinking, distinctive cultural life and its own special environment, is bound to have its own philosophical problems and it must feel called upon continually to seek their solution. India has led a distinc-

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tive cultural life since long, persistently pursued philosophical orientations of life, put forth extremely original personalities and commands a distinctive environment. Evidently its philosophical problems will be, in good part, distinctive. It is an interesting inquiry, in fact a necessity of the philosophical mind, to ask what these problems are?

The problems of India and their solutions as a whole must be related to what we as Indian people are and what our situation is. This is our total empirical reality and that is the proper foothold of life. Our character and personality, our habits, attitudes, interests and values of life on the one hand and our circumstances and situation, physical, social and cultural, near at hand in the country itself, in the immediate neighbourhood and the wider world on the other, are the two factors which together must create our problems for us as also suggest and indicate their solutions. However the problems of the empirical always need the ultimate for an effective solution. Otherwise we get make-shifts but not solutions. So far as the circumstances and situation are concerned, they as physical facts are easy enough to observe. But our personality and selfhood are complicated phenomena. Our present selfhood may consist of one set of values, but this may be a superficial formation only. Another selfhood of another set of values may be persisting in us as a suppressed fact of our life. In such a case the energies of the selfhood concerned, of its motivations, will not be much available to the present selfhood. An effective creativity in life, however, depends upon a conscious and integrated direction of the entire energies of one's life. Besides, the environment too takes its full meaning and character from the interpretations of our selfhood. Selfhood thus becomes doubly important.

With political independence came national self-government, self-direction and self-development. But what selfhood of the people is to operate and seek self-realisation and self-fulfilment? Since independence the urge for national self-discovery and self-recovery has been evident all around. But the problem is not an easy one. We had tended to develop a distinctive selfhood during the last thirty years of the freedom struggle. Shall we accept that as our representative selfhood? Or shall we look across our entire historical existence and in particular our most creative periods, which gave us our ever-recurrent values of life and seek our more abiding selfhood? In the emphatic word of the Gita, our *Swabhava*, the nature of our being, is the most important philosophical and cultural problem of contemporary India.

A progressive clarity in it will enable us to utilise our deepest cultural

instincts and thus achieve increasing creativity in life and enjoy greater self-satisfaction.

But while a strong urge for self-discovery has been evident in the nation all round, there has also been in operation a contrary pressure of the circumstances. 'What others are doing', 'What is considered successful', 'What must be done in the modern world', 'to be progressive', 'not to be behind others' are normal motives of the human mind and they have surely exercised their pressure on us and determined the direction of our effort and growth. But to the extent that we respond to them or rather let ourselves be determined by them, we deny ourselves a proper self-determination. The pursuit will then tend to become superficial and external, and fail to command the deeper motivations and improve life essentially. We act rightly when in the best possible self-possession and self-awareness, free from external coercive and hustling persuasions and pressures, we cognise our situation, determine our seeking in it and then decide upon an action.

It will be interesting, for example, to analyse the motivations which are aroused and mobilised in our wide and vast national planning programs. The example of other countries and an empirical civic sense are perhaps the commonest motivations employed. They seek also to draw upon the traditional selflessness and the spirit of service of the Indian character to achieve the goal of national development. But the latter attitude involves a response to certain intrinsic values, the former to ordinary common self-interest.

Democracy and politics have been since independence perhaps the most powerful new influences in our life. And they are getting incorporated pretty satisfactorily. Yet it must be recognised that they are a formation by themselves, which have to be integrated into and reconciled with the older and the deeper corresponding motivations. This has not yet been done. One might argue that with time a sense of maturity in management of national life will come. But that maturity can be gained quicker and more effectively by expanding and strengthening our deepest political sense so as to incorporate into it the best and the indispensable which the present has to offer.

These two great forces of our life, which have otherwise acted confidently and powerfully in the management of national and international issues, have behaved rather timidly in dealing with religion. Religion has been in India the deepest and the strongest motive of life. It has evoked the best energy of the people for all kinds of great purposes. Latterly, when it had

fallen into decadence, it had been much misused too. But a democracy with the welfare ideal cannot afford to forego any motivation, which can serve that ideal. And among all human motivations the religious has been its best servant. It is not ununderstandable that democracy and political life had wanted to remain clear of the confusions in which religion recently was in India. But it will certainly have to attempt a bolder solution of the problem. We will have to recognise the essential truth of religion and thereby remove the compartmentalisation that today exists between political life and it. That will mean the annexation of the powerful energies of the religious motive to the rest of the life of the individual as well as the nation. That will make for a greater understanding and unity in our life. It will, in particular, give a depth to all our motivations, which seek to support our political life and its different activities.

The solution, which we will have to attempt, has been in fact clearly indicated in recent times. Sri Ramakrishna had shown in his own great example how different religions embody distinctive and unique realisations of God and how they had proved to be enrichments of his life. Sri Aurobindo has given a philosophical formulation too to the same experience. He affirms a 'spiritual religion of humanity'. The spirit in all humanity is one and that being so, different religions can only be representatives and embodiments of distinctive experiences of the same. This is the essential and the reconciling truth of all religions and its due recognition will make for greater integrity and strength in the individual and in the nation.

We have a basic metaphysical problem too to solve. It is easy to recognise that the Indian temperament is essentially metaphysical. It does not feel satisfied with the merely empirical. It seeks an ultimate solution of every issue or problem. Not that in its long history positivistic reactions have not taken place. Buddhism was a strong such trend of the Indian spirit. But it could not satisfy it indefinitely. It had developed a metaphysics of its own and even then it had to give place to avowedly metaphysical views and ways of life.

The Indian people have inherited from the more recent centuries a view of life, which regards the world as more or less unreal. Now the practice of contemporary life is essentially one, which places a high value on the pursuits and the attainments of the world. Evidently we have an inner conflict here. If I feel that the world is unreal then how can my energies flow without restriction and inhibition into its various pursuits, which I accept and follow. An urgent philosophical

synthesis is here called for. For a more positivist temperament it may not be necessary, but for the Indian temperament it is an individual as well as a national need. How is the work in and for the world related to the ultimately Real? If an organic relation is discovered between the two, then democracy, national and civic life and all the pursuits of life receive a higher sanction. They become, as it were, means for the realisation of God and Truth.

Science and technology too, which are claiming such a large share of national energy, stand as a thing apart, unintegrated into the essential view of life and existence to which we traditionally subscribe. If the above stated metaphysical problem is satisfactorily attempted, it will serve to found these too deeply in the Indian character and thereby make available to them the best energies of Indian life. If Nature is a fact whole and sole and I secretly regard it as unreal, how can I be whole-heartedly enthusiastic about the exploration of its truth? But if Nature is a real aspect of the Brahman and one can approach the Brahman through Nature too, then she becomes a most inspiring subject.

A progressive synthesization of life's diverse movements has been a characteristic trend of Indian culture. In the history of Indian life we find again and again most remarkable feats of welding diverse elements, of reconciling differences, of assimilating things new. This trend has given ample evidence of its force and strength in recent years both in the sphere of national life as well as international relations. The integration of India has been the most striking achievement of it at home and the creation of a force for peace and moral considerations in the world abroad.

But in these we have profited rather unconsciously from an inherited asset. We do not know the true secret of it. If the asset has stood us in such great stead and we need it ever more for the problems of fissiparous tendencies of various kinds at home and wide differences in the international field, then we need very much to know its source of strength and its method of growth and cultivation. This too must be recognised as a problem, as a thing we must attempt for a fuller unfoldment of our national life.

The problem of unity is only a variant form of this. India, we say, is diverse and has been diverse. We feel insecure in the face of separative claims of languages, regions, castes, creeds and religions. Evidently we do not know the true basis of unity that India clearly possesses and has possessed. We say it is culture. But even here we are confronted with much diversity. Surely within this cultural diversity there is yet some basis of unity. What that is is again a problem of deep significance for us. Without

a clear knowledge of it we will be forced to seek unity by adjustments of political, economic and other interests in a superficial way and yet never feel sufficiently secure in a sense of national unity.

Appreciation and enjoyment of intrinsic values, of truth as such, of goodness as such, of God, of service, of selflessness and the like, has been a fairly wide feeling in Indian life. The seers, saints and sages, who have mostly determined and inspired Indian life, were themselves exemplars of these values. This appreciation and enjoyment, one can say, was the best experience and inspiration of the people and it promoted certain traits of character, which have been the true strength of Indian life.

Today, as a part of the world culture, a utilitarian philosophy of life is the more dominant influence. How Indian life reacts to it or should react to it is a matter of great consequence. If the intrinsic values are recognised as the true hold of life, then we have to see how they can be preserved, cultivated and expanded in our own experience and that of the wider world.

The relation of the individual and the society has been for very many centuries a weak point in Indian life. The spiritual emphasis of life itself tended to make the individual an absolute soul. The result was that social life and its obligations tended to become a superficial necessity. This could not engender a sense of social solidarity. But while the individual is a soul, which is a particular fact, he is one among other souls and intimately a part of universal existence. Thus there is a universal aspect, a social, national, human and that of total reality, attached to the individual. This aspect has to be duly discovered and the social consciousness rightly founded and progressively built up.

We have considered above some of the more important problems, which a philosophical consideration of our contemporary Indian life might feel obliged to take notice of. It appears, it is possible to sum them up in one. A deeper consideration of the long history and the wide phenomena of Indian life seems to show that the experience of the Spirit, of the soul in the individual and of a universal spirit in the world, were the basic facts to it. They tended to influence and inspire the rest of the life. Now the Spirit, by nature, is a unitary and abiding fact behind and above the multiple and changing phenomena. It was perhaps the ultimate source and inspiration of our qualities of depth, insight, toleration, synthesization, endurance, persistence, renewability and an underlying unity. If so, then to seek the Spirit, to awaken in us an appreciation of its qualities, is our first and essential problem. And in the measure that we succeed in doing so, we will be-

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come secure against being carried off our feet by the superficial currents of life, be more and more ourselves and learn to wield the multiplicity and diversity of the phenomenal existence through the true underlying unity.

(Paper presented to the Indian Philosophical Congress, 1955)

INDRA SEN

The movement of ascension can not finish so long as
the movement of descent is not ready to finish.

I-2-34

SRI AUROBINDO

THE CONCEPT OF “SATYA” OR “SATYAM” IN THE VEDA

THE word Satya comes from the root as: अस् to be, to exist. Sat is the present participle,=“Being”. Satya is “Beingness”, “the quality of existence”, the state or condition of Reality. It has come to mean “Truth”. This conception of Truth and its active application in life necessitates a degree of development far beyond the mere primitive. As already pointed out the Rig Veda has many words carrying various psychological significances connected with different functions of human consciousness. Not only that, but it uses several words to denote fine shades of differences in functions of similar nature. Thus we have *Rishi* and *Kavi*, *Vipra* and *Vipaścīt*, *Pracetā*, *Medhāvi*, *Manīṣī*, and *Suri* to indicate men of knowledge in various aspects.

The conception of Truth or Satya also has “Ritam” another word to convey the dynamic aspect of the Truth, that which when transferred to the field of conduct, becomes, the moral law and the plane of Matter becomes the law that orders the behaviour of material elements.

The ancients not only knew about Truth and its dynamic aspect but they also indicated its nature by stating that it was “Brihat”,—“Vast” as opposed to narrowness of the Untruth. They also knew the opposite of Truth “Asatya” and “Anrita”. It was from the cave, ‘guhā’, of the Inconscient, from the mountain, “Adri”, of the hard material inertia that “darkness” Tamas, was born—the symbol of Untruth. To them Light was the symbol of knowledge, of Illumination of the Truth and Darkness that of unconsciousness—अचित्—achit,—Ignorance. They did not acquire this knowledge by following intellectual processes but by an inner method of self-culture which laid open before their inner vision the realms hidden behind the outer and material aspect of the universe.

Not only Light but the Sun which is the source of Light was to them symbolic of the Truth itself. Light was made of the Rays of Truth, the Cows of the Sun—the herds of the Sun. Sri Aurobindo aptly calls them the

"Ray-cows" for the word "go" carries the double sense right down to the present times. We do not therefore find Truth mentioned as often as the use of the concept of Truth in the form of the symbol Sun and its derivative symbol Cows—i.e. the Ray-Cows. In fact, the main subject of the Veda may be said to be the attainment of Truth, Light, and Immortality by man.

But here we shall take up the references where the mention is made of the word 'Satya' or 'Satyam' and not symbolic hymn in which the words 'Sun' or 'Cows' are used.

The very first Mandala mentions Agni (I.1.5) as "*Hotā, Kavi-Kratu, Satyaḥ, Citraśravastamaḥ*";—Agni is said to be "True". If the reference is only to material fire the words "Kavi Kratu"—"One whose will is that of seer" has no relevance and 'True' has still less. We have to grant that Agni—Fire—has some connection with Truth. In other hymns we find that the "home of this Agni" is in Truth and it is not here in the manifested universe of matter, life and mind, but Above, on the plane of Ritam. In I.20.4 the Ribhus are called "Satya-Mantra"—"One whose mentalisings are true" i.e. full of Truth, and therefore effective. They are, "Rijuyavah"—"Straight in their movement". This word Riju has connection with Ritam as both come from the root Ri: ॠ: to move, to be active.

Take I. 105. 12 where Trita, who according to the legend (which seems symbolic in its import) had fallen into a well, prays for protection and succour. "*ṛtam arṣanti Saidhavaḥ Satyam tātān Sūryo*" (I.105. 12). "The Oceans (of the Superconscient) impel the Ritam—the dynamic Truth,—; the Sun has extended the Truth".

Here the identification of the symbol Sun with the concept of Truth is clear. Sayana makes a pathetic attempt at twisting this simple meaning saying "*Swakiyam Tejaḥ*"—(Truth) "is his own Light"—But then the seer could have used the word indicating "light" which he does at so many other places.

In III. 39.5 the nature of the Sun is made amply clear even by the context. "*Sakhāha yatra Sakhibhiḥ navagvai rabhi Satvabhirgā anugman*" —"*Satyam tat indraḥ daśabhir daśgvaihi Sūryam Viveda tamsi Kṣiyantam*" We shall not enter into the explanation of the Navagvas—'the nine-Rayed' and the Dashgvas "the ten rayed" Angirasa Seers. It has clear reference to an inner growth by a special process, for it is mentioned that the Navagvas attain the perfection by the pursuit of an inner effort for nine months while they become Dashgvas if they continue the effort for ten months. It is even suggested in this hymn that Indra pursues and finds the Ray-cows with the

help of the *Navagvās*—the nine-Rayed, fiery Angirasa Seers (who are themselves embodiments of Fire or his sons). But it is with the help of the *Dashgvas*—the ten-Rayed—that he finds the Sun.

“Indra with *Dashagvās* knew (Viveda) that Truth, the Sun, dwelling in the Darkness”.

The Darkness that is the root of Ignorance is the symbol of the Inconscient even of the Nescient. But the Darkness is really not without its Truth. Even in the depth of this Darkness Indra and the *Dashgvas* find the Sun—the Truth working from behind. The operations of the Inconscient are supported from behind by the power of the Truth. Darkness of the Inconscient hides the Sun of Truth below in its depth.

In VI. 49. 6 there is mention of the power of Truth when it is “heard” by man. “*Satyāśruhaḥ Kavayaḥ Yasya girbhiḥ jagataḥ Sthātārjagadā Kṛinudhvam*”. The poets are, they who hear the Truth,—they by whose expression, (you O Maruts) you maintain the world and create from all sides the world”.

In VII. 49.3., a hymn to “Waters” by Vasishta we have a wide cosmic view given by the Vedic sage.

Yāsām rājā Varuṇo Yāti madhye Satyā-nṛte avapaśyan janānām”

“Waters, in the midst of which the king (or the shining) Varuna moves looking down on the Truth and Falsehood of the peoples”.

It is clear that these “Waters” are not on the earth, because Varuna “looks down” and so he must look from above the ordinary level. The relative nature and the interdependence of Truth and Falsehood in an evolutionary world are indicated here. As the whole universe seems to start with the Inconscient, the unrelieved Darkness,—“*Tamāsīt Tamasā nigūḍham*” of the Xth Mandala—it has got to pass through a stage of Ignorance, in which both Truth and Falsehood have their play, before reaching the realm of the highest Truth, the realm of the Sun, the plane of Ritam. Varuna, the Lord of wideness (Uru “wide”) and purity, sees in men the working of these two powers from his seat Above and helps them in the evolution towards the highest Truth. Thus Truth is to be attained by enlarging—widening, the consciousness.

In VII. 76.4. the “hidden Light” almost suggests the “Sun dwelling in the Darkness” and the hymn states that the ancient Fathers gave birth to the Dawn!

*“Tadid devānām sadhamāda āsannṛtavānaḥ Kavayaḥ purtvyāsaḥ;
Gūḍham jyotiḥ pitro anvavindantsatyamantrā ajanayanannushāsham”*

THE CONCEPT OF "SATYA" OR "SATYAM" IN THE VEDA

"They came to rejoice in company with the Gods,—the Angirasas, possessed of Truth, the ancient seers. They, the Fathers, followed after and attained the secret Light; they of the True Mantras gave birth to (created) the Dawn"

The Angirasas are among the ancient Fathers. They by their inner effort and askesis prepare the path for future generations of men—the path by which they might find the Truth, attain the Sun. The birth of Dawn as a phenomenon of daily occurrence was well-known to the seers of the Veda. In fact, they speak more than once about the succession of Day and Night and the seasons. How could they then state that Dawn was brought to birth by the power of Mantra by the Angirasa Seers? This Dawn along with the Sun, the Light and Darkness is also a symbol. It is the first awakening of the human consciousness to the possibility of attaining Light and Truth. The Angirasas by their inner efforts brought into being the Dawn of human awakening to divine possibility.

In IX.73.1 occurs the phrase

"Satyasya navaḥ sukṛtam apiparaṇ" The hymn is dedicated to Soma, the wine of Delight of existence. Soma, the Powerful one, (Asura), created the three (planes) from his head for their movement, "it is the boats of the Truth that carry the good deeds (or doer of good deeds) across". The conception of the 'boats' and crossing over 'Sin' or "darkness", or "Ignorance" is common in the Veda. It occurs in connection with the Maruts as well as with Varuna.

The hostile powers, forces of Nature that oppose the Truth,—satyam and Ritam,—have to be destroyed as otherwise they would destroy the Truth—this is the idea brought out in X.87.11.

"Ritam yo agne anṛten hanti" "May that hostile power come thrice under thy scorching flames, O Fire!, who kills the Truth with falsehood.

In IX.113, the seer clearly mentions Ritam and Satyam in connection with the Soma sacrifice. In the 4th rik we have "Ritamvadan ṛtadyumna Satyam vadantsatya karman" "Speaking or expressing the Truth and shining with the Light of the Truth, speaking Satya and doing the action,—Soma is to flow for Indra's sake.

In IX.113.5 the flow of Soma juice is spoken of as the stream of "Satyam ugrasya bṛhataḥ"—"Wide and intense Truth".

This Truth that is referred to here is the Sun (in the symbolic language) or better the Sun-world—the world of Ritam (as well as Satyam) because there on the Truth-plane beyond mind Truth and Right—Knowledge and

Will are indivisible. It is only in the limited and divided and dividing mind that there is a gulf between Knowledge and Will. This Truth is also Vast, Infinite. The word Brahman that became current in later day Indian thought is connected with this Vast "Brihat"—in its original root. The "Satyam", "Ritam" "Brihat" of the Veda came to be expressed by the word "Brahman"—the "Infinite"—the Vast. It also was expressed by "Sat" and "Chit"—and the Vast was replaced by Ananda—the essential delight of existence.

' Sayana's interpretation of Satyam and Satyah.

In I. 38. 7 he is not definite as to whether "Satyam" in the rik refers to 'Twesh' or "Miham" i.e. "Twishah is Satyam" or "Miham Krinvanti" is Satyam.

In I. 52. 13 he explains "Satyam" as "Nischayena" "certainly." Indra is said in this Rik to attain "all", the mid-regions, and by his greatness to Truth. This must be the sense because 'Satyam' is followed by "addha" which means "certainly", "truly".

In I. 57. 1 the word "Satya Shushmāya" occurs, which Sayana explains as "āvitatha balāya", "One whose strength never fails".

In the famous lament of Trita, the son of waters, who had fallen into a well, Sayana himself half-heartedly admits the symbolic sense of the Veda: he derives Trita as "Tritas-tirna tamatiraskrita agnānam" one who has abandoned ignorance. "Trita means one who is wide extended or most extended,—one who has overthrown ignorance i.e. has attained knowledge. Trita says that "the Sun has extended the Truth" and further in I. 105. 16 he says: "the Solar path or the Sun-lit path, is extended in heaven, not even the gods can overpass it, and the mortals do not see it". In the 18th hymn he asserts that the hostile power, "the Red-Wolf", saw me on that path and looking at me it went up like the blacksmith that looks up to relieve the pain in his back. (straightens his back)

It is in the interpretation of this hymn that Yaska finds the difficulty of splitting up the words—pada—of the Veda. "Māskrit" can be split into mā+skrit or māsa+skrit. Yielding different significance.

In IV. 17. 5 the word 'Satyam' is used for Indra. In V. 51. 2 "Satyan dharmano" is used. Sayana explains it as "Satya Stutayah abādhyā karmano". In fact, it means one whose Dharma is Satya,—the Truth, or "whose function is true".

In V. 57. 8 the "Satya Shruta" is rendered "Satyena Satyafalēna prasiddhah"—instead of "One who hears or has heard the Truth". It must be so because the hymn speaks of "Satya shrutah Kavayah"—"poets or seers who hear the voice of the Truth."

In VI. 65. 5 the sacrificers or the Angirasas are said to break open the darkness by the mantras—and that led to the effective result—the presence of the Gods.

In VII. 83. 7 Sayana renders 'Satyaha' as "safalaha".

IX. 64. 2 Soma is said to be "Satyam Vrishan"—"Thou who rainest down the Truth".

REFERENCES TO SATYAM

(Rig Veda)

I.1.5	I.20.4	I.38.7	I.52.13	I.57.1	I.105.12	I.127.8	I.179.6
III.14.1	III.39.5	IV.17.5	V.51.2	V.57.8	V.79.1	VI.49.6	
VI.65.5	VII.49.3	VII.75.7	VII.76.4	VII.83.4	VII.83.7	VIII.2.36	
VIII.16.8	VIII.40.11	VIII.45.27	IX.64.2	IX.73.1	IX.78.5	IX.113.4	
IX.113.5	X.27.1	X.87.11	X.87.12				

A. B. PURANI

THE LIFE DIVINE

AN OUTLINE

THE ETERNAL AND THE INDIVIDUAL

VOL. II—CHAPTER III

THE foundation of our belief in a divine Life in material Nature rests on three fundamental truths of existence: an Omnipresent Reality; a dynamic Power of this Omnipresence, which produces a self-manifesting movement; and the movement itself which takes the shape of a descent of superconscience into inconscience, the awakening of the individual, and his evolution or progressive ascent into the spiritual consciousness and universal and transcendent Self. Thus we have to discover the origin of the Ignorance out of which the spiritual consciousness is emerging, and the nature of the Knowledge that has to replace it. For it is clear that Knowledge, concealed in the Ignorance, has to be unveiled, by upward and inward self-unfolding, rather than acquired. But first we have to see whether the individual is a persistent entity, even after liberation through unity and self-knowledge.

Since this higher knowledge is beyond the logical reason it has to be met by a wider experience. First we must have a clear and flexible mind. Although logical reasoning is a help towards clarification, by itself it cannot arrive at the wider knowledge of the world and of God; for it acts more as a guardian against error than a discoverer of truth. The habit of the logical mind in working exclusively by distinctions may even be a stumbling-block towards attaining the knowledge of unity and oneness.

Reason is accustomed to identifying the individual self with the ego. But the ego is only a present practical means whereby the activities of Nature, our mental, physical and vital experience, are centralised in us.

Behind this surface individualisation is a consciousness (a Purusha) that supports the individual formation but is not limited by it. Individualisation in fact rests on world-being for its experience. If either Purusha or world-being disappear then individualisation would cease.

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Purusha can become one with world-being, and hence cease to be the self-limiting ego. We then experience oneness with all beings. But this does not abolish individuality, for the soul then makes the world-becoming the material for individual experience, as a subjective awareness. The spiritual individual would at the same time realise his oneness with the Transcendence.

Our experience of unity with world-being, and with all individual beings, demonstrates that the transcendent Self must be one in its being. Consequently the power of its being—expressed in cosmic differentiation and multiple individuality—has its part in the consciousness and infinite delight of the Divine. It is thus not necessary, for our ultimate perfection, to reject the nature, action and power of the divine Existence.

In our waking consciousness we can experience the oneness of the differentiation and become aware of all other individuals, in their mental and practical action also, as selves of oneself. But yet we are aware that the Divine in himself exceeds this universalisation. Similarly the individual exists though he exceeds the separative ego.

Since the Divine has not lost His oneness by accepting differentiation, so we do not forfeit perfection by retaining differentiation. Having surpassed the ego we can have perfect union with the Divine, and also with the differentiated unity, for we should possess the Divine calm in the midst of eternal action. The purpose of the differentiation is the means of our achieving a greater unity, opening us to the large possession and bliss of the Divine universal being, as well as enjoying the Divine in His pure unity.

Both individual being and world-being are unified by the Divine Being. Although world-being always includes individual being, the latter also comes eventually to include the world in its consciousness. Thus we can say that the individual has always included cosmos but failed to possess it because of his limitation of ego. This experience of the world in me, I in the world, all in me, I in all is beyond the normal reason and hence cannot be adequately expressed in the language of ordinary experience. The world spoken of here is not the physical world; it is a spiritual experience in which the individual and the all become one. This is possible because the cosmos and the individual are manifestations of a transcendent Self who is indivisible and present everywhere.

This experience of mutuality founded in unity is the basis of divine existence, and is the experience also of the true individual, not of the ego. We speak of the true individual not in the finite sense of something separate

and apart, but the soul being—an indivisible and conscious power of being of the Eternal, existing by unity and capable of mutuality.

Spiritual experience cannot be adequately expressed in abstract language. Thus to say that God is in me and I am in God means that God does not depend for His existence on man, but that He manifests Himself in that which He manifests within Himself. The liberated individual can thus enjoy the Divine in His transcendence, and at the same time enjoy the Divine in other individuals and in His cosmic being. The three terms of Reality—the Transcendent, the individual and cosmic being—express a unity that is more than a unity, or rather a fuller expression of unity.

These experiences are powerfully real to the liberated consciousness. But our logical reason is bound by words (or definitions) and fails to grasp the greater truths beyond present word meanings. Thus we regard the Absolute and the relative as irreconcilable opposites; for we cannot reconcile oneness with God with a relation with Him, and likewise we cannot see that unity is co-existent with individualisation. It is an error of the reasoning mind to make an unbridgeable gulf between the Absolute and the relative, to extend too far the law of contradiction, and to conceive in terms of Time that which has its origin in the Eternal.

The Absolute (or Brahman) is something greater than ourselves and greater than cosmos. The sum of all relativities is but a partial expression of the Absolute. We become aware of the Absolute through spiritual experience, and it cannot be described in the language of the relative for the Absolute is ineffable.

The Absolute is neither bound by the limitations of the relative nor is it bound by its freedom from limitations. It is thus not opposed to the relative. While we ourselves are bound by the relative we see the world as an illusion or unreality against the pure Reality of the Absolute. But the Absolute finds no difficulty in world-manifestation with simultaneous transcendence. It is our intellectual reasoning that creates the opposition and apparent contradiction. When we enter into the consciousness and logic of the Infinite these primal facts of being are reconciled.

In trying to define the indefinable we create a duality, a positive (within the definition) and a negative (outside it) which becomes a contrary. If we speak of the Absolute in negatives then it becomes a non-existent. The ancient sages spoke of the Absolute as both negative and positive, which cannot be bound by even our largest mental conception. It is in fact the character of mind, since it is a limited consciousness, to find a negative for

every positive. But the negative (that which is excluded by the positive) is not an unreality but is really teeming with power of existence, full or potential, for the negative and positive together complete the all-view which the limited mind cannot compass.

What we can say of the Absolute we call positive, what we cannot say is negative. But in reality the negative conceals the whole power of the corresponding positive, and there is no opposition between the two. It is by the same mental process that we see an opposition between the transcendent and the cosmic, or the universal and the individual, where there is none. Thus the universal consciousness finds its wholeness in the numberless variations of individuals, and likewise the individual consciousness only fulfils itself when it is universalised. So too the relation between the cosmic (which includes the individual) and the transcendent reality. The fulfilment of the cosmic by the transcendent is inevitable, because in the Absolute all relativity and variation find the reason and justification for their existence. The Absolute is an existence so infinitely positive that no finite positive can be formulated to exhaust or bind down its Infinity.

The law of contradictions belongs to our present order of knowledge and material living—and does not belong to the Absolute. Ordinarily to deal with material phenomena we have to take one thing at a time. But we have to see that this is an artificial isolation.

Such isolation is necessary only for the first steps of knowledge. While it is true that each thing is distinguished in its form and properties from others, there are elements and properties common to material things in general. In fact we only get back to the enduring truth of things when we find all are the same thing—an energy, substance or motion. In the knowledge of things in their essence we reach a deeper knowledge which reconciles all distinctions, and also gives us a greater control over material Nature. But the essentiality of things is not the sole truth. We see that essentiality, commonalty, and individuality are three eternal terms of existence.

As we ascend the scale beyond purely material things we find that all things are one. Thus the plant is only an animal with insufficient evolution of self-consciousness, and the animal is man in the making; so we can say that man is a god in the making. We find that we can only understand the individual when we understand his commonalty, and at the centre of that his essentiality. Finally we realise that each thing is the Absolute, the One, but always in these three terms. Thus it cannot be our aim to dissolve our

cosmic and individual existence as a futility when we realise only the pure essential being.

All contraries, all conflicting qualities and values stand in a certain relation to each other and to the totality which we can only see from the divine viewpoint and purpose, not from the limited human view. Behind all relativities is an Absolute which expresses itself through them. We have to see all contradictions reconciled in that which is beyond their opposition.

We cannot reconcile universal contradictions merely by employing our ordinary concept of Time; for Time varies on different planes. It is not an Absolute. The working of things is not determined by Time; Time is only our means of realising things in succession. The apparent contradictions, such as the infinite and finite, are really co-existences which exist in and by each other. Behind even the largest cyclic movements of Time is the divine Timelessness or eternal Time beyond the divisions and successions of our mental experience.

In the divine Timelessness all things meet in a primary relation; we, in a material or mental world, experience things in a secondary, tertiary or lesser relation. Yet the Absolute has not thereby become the contrary of itself. The strong element of oppositions which we see in our scientific and metaphysical knowledge, as well as in exclusive spiritual realisations, springs from a need of our intellect to make distinctions. But we err when we make partial truths into whole truths. We have to admit that such apparent oppositions as the Impersonal and Personal Divine, or the One and the Many, are both real.

Beyond the duality (which is the basis of mental fragmentation) is the triple realisation (the basis of oneness). Thus in the three terms of existence—the transcendent, the universal, and the individual—each always contains the two others. While the Transcendent possesses and controls the other two, the individual (represented in the human being) is the working centre of a movement of self-manifestation evolving from the Ignorance into the Knowledge. The power of the individual to become one with the Transcendent and with the universal makes the divine self-manifestation through the individual possible. Thus the individual existence is a true and necessary centre, not of an endless cycle of pleasure and suffering, but of the transformation, the unfolding through God's working of the divine light, power and joy of the Divine Nature in individual being.

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CHAPTER IV

THE DIVINE AND UNDIVINE

Our view of existence is that the universe is a manifestation of an infinite and eternal All-Existence, that the Divine Being dwells in all things, and that we ourselves, our soul or psychic entity, are a portion of the Divine Consciousness. The condition of the world, however, seems to be the very opposite of the divine life we envisage as the culmination of the evolutionary process. Immersed as we are in the dualities of knowledge and ignorance, we have to take due account of this distinction between the divine and the undivine.

We have thus to consider the distinction between a life of knowledge and a life of ignorance. Life had emerged out of its base of Inconscience and has thus far manifested a partial consciousness, something as yet incomplete and imperfect. Thus in our present stage we have to struggle with the problem of opposites. Seeking for the divine Presence, our reason is baffled by the presence of evil. A wider outlook reveals, however, that evil and suffering are not the real root of the world's imperfections.

The general imperfection consists first in a limitation in us of the divine elements. Secondly there is a general deviation from the Truth of being, which presents itself to us as either a fall from a spiritual state, or an ideal which it is impossible for us to realise here in the world. This is because our being—at least in its surface nature—is founded on a division of the Divine Existence, and this division has resulted in a limitation and fragmentation of the divine consciousness and power. There is thus a perversion, an ignorance, a misdirection of an imperfect will and knowledge. There is too in our own nature a clinging to the divided way of being which prevents the total rejection of this falsehood and error.

Although we say that there is the divine Presence, the Self, in all things, we realise that this perfection is untouched by the outer imperfect nature. This divine essentiality has been compared to a Fire or central Sun that illumines and is not itself affected by the impurity and the falsehood.

In this duality, however, there is no reconciliation. The best we can do is to cling to the pure divine Presence, and to bring it more into our life in place of the imperfection. Or we may seek to escape into the inner Presence as the sole Truth, regarding the external nature as an illusion of the Ignorance. Or we might reconcile ourselves to the impermanence of

things, including our own temporal experience, arriving at self-extinction in Nirvana. But none of these are satisfactory solutions, since they are attainments of individual liberation, but not the divinisation of Nature herself, satisfying the universal seeking for the full expression of Divinity.

We have to face the problem by seeing the divinity of things in their wholeness and in their relation to each other, and not in their separateness. Although each thing is divine in itself, a fact of the divine being, it is also in a divine relation with the totality; it is part of the universal harmony and progression. We have to realise that perfection cannot reside in a thing in its separateness.

But even this mental adaptation and realisation is not sufficient. It intellectualises without giving the psychic element its true expression; and without the psychic we cannot experience anything more than a complacent, philosophic optimism. To find the Divine within us and above us is the real solution, and to attain that perfection in ourselves the aim.

Are we then bound to the imperfection of worldly life; must we be resigned to the present condition of life? Or is there hope of a happier existence in a Paradise beyond earth? The psychic part of our nature rejects both possibilities; for there is an inner aspiration for the elimination of all imperfections from our present nature, of which evolution is the outward expression of an inner Divine urge.

We see then that there is a divine wisdom and purpose in all things; but this belief does not justify the persistence of things as they are, but bids us seek for the true spiritual key and law of our being. This means the bringing into life itself of the spiritual knowledge and power, the Divine Law. In relation to this higher truth, the imperfections of the world appear undivine. But in our innermost aspiration there is concealed the divinity that has to emerge and manifest itself in the world.

But this belief is only as yet founded on our inner experience; there remains the root of ignorance in the whole cosmic order. The mind, perplexed by this outward contradiction, has sought refuge in three propositions about the beyond and the world. First there is the Omnipresent Reality, pure and perfect. Our highest experience affirms that the one pure Existence exists in all things and beings, which themselves exist in and by that indwelling and all-supporting Presence.

Secondly it is realised that all things are ordered and governed by the supreme power of this omnipresent Divinity. But yet there appears a disharmony, a perversion, in the actual process of things, so that a third proposi-

tion—contrary to the others—has to be made: that the Divine Reality and the world reality are different. The conclusion would then be that we have to reject the world in order to find the Divine.

We can reconcile ourselves to this conclusion only by considering an indifferent God, a silent or inactive Self unconcerned with the cosmic Illusion. But the dualism is not reconciled. A discord and gulf between the Self in knowledge and the same Self in works is inexplicable. All that exists in the world must be ordered and related by the Power of the Reality that created it. The eternal Self-Existence must be aware of the world-consciousness which exists in its very being, and at the same time be aware in the world-consciousness. There must also be a power of the eternal Self-Existence which originates or determines the universe.

On this basis of a power that governs the universe, we realise that the imperfection and ignorance in Nature is a sanction and allowance of the Divine Will, and not an action of a free and independent Power of darkness and evil.

First we must see that ignorance, suffering and discord need not be a denial of the divine being, such as appears when we take things separately out of their divine harmony in the totality. This is the standpoint of our limited, surface ego-consciousness, which acts by apparent but not real division.

This identification with the superficial ego-consciousness in our mental, vital and physical being is but characteristic of our present nature and serves a practical purpose while the mental being is immersed in Ignorance. Yet the Ignorance itself is but a superficial movement, a frontal operation of a knowledge that is held back behind it. This secret store of the all-consciousness is not separated but merely veiled from the Ignorance. We see this in the minute workings of Nature. Thus the frontal action of Ignorance is really a power of concentration in a limited working. It is a purposively restrained power directed towards a forevisioned result.

This concentration—what we experience as ignorance—is a sign of the Divine Power; for it is a self-limitation that yet works out perfectly all its intentions. Thus when we examine the minutest structures of matter or life we find a perfect order, which indicates a hidden All-knowledge behind the veil of the outer action. And also in ourselves we discover a deeper inner being or larger spiritual state behind our surface ignorance. Over all and behind all is the universal Presence, the Lord of all Nature.

From the point of view of the Divine working, all that we experience

as weakness and incapacity is really a restraint of energy in the divine economy. We see, therefore, in the struggles, difficulties, and what seem to us failures in our own and Nature's working, are in fact signs of the working of an absolute omnipotence.

Suffering itself is but a holding-back from the delight. It is our reaction to the being's incapacity to seize the pure delight. Division has brought about restraint, and hence discomfort or pain. Behind the surface consciousness is the All-Delight; pain and suffering are the contrary terms of this delight that we experience in our limited consciousness. In ourselves we discover the All-Delight in our inmost Self, the psychic being, which turns experience—even suffering and misfortunes—into growth of consciousness. Nothing but divine Oneness could throw out so much discord and disharmony, and yet achieve a growing universal rhythm and harmony. What we see is a veil covering the Divine Perfection.

Yet we have to take due account of our present limited human consciousness. Suffering, falsehood, ignorance, weakness and evil are indeed facts of the world-consciousness. They serve both a cosmic and individual utility; where pain and error represent our first approaches to the truth of things. Division itself is but the first condition of our ultimate unification, following the law of life evolving out of the Inconscience. We have first to face and endure evil and the imperfection in order to ultimately overcome and transform life and nature. The Ignorance is the great spur to the soul in its endeavour to transform the present outer nature, not to escape from this great goal.

The imperfection is law special to the present movement of the evolution. It does, in fact, belong to the mind consciousness, but in relation to a wider purpose and aim. The separation of mind from the Divine Consciousness in order to realise ultimately the opposite values to the present mental consciousness—those of all-knowledge, all-power, all-delight,—clearly have a divine purpose and meaning as a phase in the manifestation.

We need not accept the present law of Nature—with its imperfection, ignorance and suffering—as a fixed and permanent condition of worldly life. The spiritual aim, the soul's liberation, is not to escape finally from the world, but to face and accept the ignorance. Man's earthly life is not condemned to eternal imperfection or a perpetual undivine manifestation.

If we see no redemption in the earth nature then man's worldly life becomes a transitory existence or an illusory one, in either case merely a stage towards a heaven or Nirvana beyond. But it is precisely the divine

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Spirit in man that has plunged into this imperfection, and in the form of the mental being has accepted the suffering. We have to take into account the conscious assent by the soul to this manifestation, and at the same time see the Divine reason that makes the world-play significant and real.

The sharp opposition between the world-play of ignorance and the pure Divine Nature becomes more explicable when we realise the ascending grades of substance, each with its appropriate order and law of nature. These are the established steps from the inconscient to the superconscient for the progressive ascent of the souls embodied in material forms. Man, part knowledge and part ignorance, is a mid-stage in the evolutionary unfolding, and hence he experiences the duality of opposites, which is not merely a negative but a positive contrary.

It has to be seen, however, why such progressive manifestation was at all necessary. When we trace the movement back to the soul's ascent and the Divine Will behind, we see that it is part of the condition of the play of Divine Delight. Separation and self-concealing only intensify the joy of union and self-finding. The surprise of new and unforeseen creation constitutes the great adventure of the soul. Ultimately we realise that the pure Divine Existence had plunged into the Inconscience in order to express a new affirmation of the Divine Nature in that which appeared as its opposite.

N. PEARSON

REVIEWS

Living Biographies of Religious Leaders by *Thomas and Dana Lee Thomas*.—Published by Bhavan's Book University, Bombay, India. pp 250
Price 1:12.

This book contains twenty religious lives, written in a bright and breezy style, and makes delightful reading. That the authors are catholic in their views and free from any racial or national bias is attested by the following words:

“Religions generally grow in hot soil. God walks among the primitive peoples in the Orient and touches their brow with the fire of His presence so that they see the vision and bring it westward to Europe. But not infrequently, when the eastern message reaches the colder regions of the west, it loses the tenderness of poetry and becomes hardened into the dry dogma of sectarianism. For the peoples of the west are the citizens of science and of subtle disputation. They are clever only with their hands and their heads. They have not as yet grown up to the wisdom of the heart.”

What with the choice of the themes, the arrangement of the incidents, the force and vividness of the narration, these short biographies read like gripping stories lit up with a lofty idealism. There is poetry and a fine dramatic effect in the delineation of the characters whose greatness leaves an indelible imprint upon the mind of the reader. Describing the desert life of Moses, the authors say:

“The Egyptian prince is now a shepherd in the wild steppes that border on the desert. A new chapter in his education has begun. He has given up the dusty parchment scrolls of the university, with their crude stories about the shadows of the dead. In their place he has learned to read the scroll of heavens at night, with its flaming syllables of living stars. He has cast out of his mind the ridiculous animal and bird and reptile divinities of the Egyptians, and he has undertaken to discover a new and more dignified kind

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of God. He finds Him in the wilderness, riding in the sandstorm. He hears his voice in the thunder. In the early morning, when the rays of the sun have touched the shrubbery of the desert into sudden flame, he beholds Him face to face in the burning bush.

"Moses has met his new God in the desert. A terrible God of the wilderness. An Arabian God. A God who leaps over the mountains, gallops across the wastelands, and reclines in the tents of colourful splendour. A God who watches over His people while they sleep, leads them into battle, smites their enemies without mercy, changes His mind like the wind, is quick to avenge an insult, and is not above telling a falsehood when it serves His purpose to do so. Yet He is a God who will brook no injustice, who is generous to the alien, gentle to the fatherless and merciful to the poor. A God, in short, who possesses all the faults and the virtues of the Arabian Bedouin. It is as if Moses had looked into a mirror and recognised God in his own image. Indeed, the portrait of Jehovah as painted by Moses is the picture of Moses himself, magnified to superhuman proportions. The great religious leader, like the great artist, incorporates his own character into the character of his sitter."

Describing the trial of John Huss, the authors write:

"They came to him in large numbers, urging, begging, threatening him to recant. They promised him absolution, and great riches, a fine bishopric, and costly robes, if only he would sign a statement to his large following that he had preached errors and that he was now willing to be corrected. They drew up various forms of confessions, tried various arrangements of words in an effort to find a way that would be easiest for his pride and his reputation. And he smiled with the smile of a father at these children who were bent on juggling and rearranging the letters of the alphabet as if they could thus coax the truth into renouncing itself!"

The portrait of John Wesley has been finely drawn with deft and delicate touches like the following:

"At fifty one he had almost died of consumption. He had even composed his own epitaph. But at seventy-four he was riding furiously all over the countryside. At eighty-three he confessed sheepishly in his Diary that he was unable to write more than fifteen hours a day without tiring his

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eyes. And at eighty-six he came galloping to his appointments, his hair 'smoothly combed out into a soupçon of curls', and his cheeks still glowing with the fires of ruddy youth."

There is much in the biographical sketches of St. Paul, St. Francis of Assisi, Luther and Gandhi that is not only very interesting, but instructive and ennobling. The life of Mary Baker Eddy, not so well known perhaps as the religion of Christian Science which she herself preached, has been invested with a romantic glow. Her radiant spirit seems to move through the pages declaring:

"That day will come when all who have not yet awakened from the sluggishness of material life will have that joy...will feel love and goodness transforming them and their surroundings to a beauty and peace unknown before....Then will it be forgotten that there have ever been dreamed such things as sickness, bereavement, or estrangement; that there have ever been dreamed such things as poverty, toil or disappointment."

But the very penchant for the picturesque and the dramatic has, no unoften, betrayed the authors into exaggerations and distortions of truth. Facts overcoloured and over-dramatised easily become fiction. This is particularly regrettable in such a fine book which is sure to have a wide popular appeal. For instance, we read in the life of Buddha, "The brilliance of his marriage was darkened by the shadow of disappointment. For his wife was childless. The young prince began to brood." Later on in the same life: "And then Buddha in an age of semi-savagery proclaimed the golden rule of conduct...." One wonders what has made the well-meaning authors commit such a cold-blooded outrage on history! Was the Buddhist period of Indian history an age of semi-savagery? Again in the same life, the authors make Buddha declare that our human existence represents the soul's journey from earth to heaven, and that this journey is a successive migration of the soul through many bodies!! The authors have indulged at times in a rather flippant witticism at the expense of Moses, Zoroaster and Mohammed. It would probably jar the religious susceptibilities of devout Mahomedans to read the following lines:

"He (Mohammed) died in the arms of his youngest and most beautiful concubine, fully expecting to awaken in the arms of one even more beautiful. And his wild and earnest followers continued their search for beauty with the point of the sword."

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The publishers, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Book University, who have been doing admirable work in bringing out, at a nominal price, some of the best books written by Indian and Western authors, have announced in a note, "With the exception of Mahatma Gandhi¹ the religious leaders whose lives and teachings are described in this volume, belong to countries outside India. India, as is well known, has had an unbroken succession of Religious Leaders and Philosophers from time immemorial. It is our intention to publish a companion volume containing the Lives and Teachings of Indian religious Leaders and Philosophers in the not too distant future."

I hail this laudable intention. Its fulfilment will surely meet a keenly felt want. Lives of saints and sages, of the heroes of spiritual exploration and discovery, the apostles of Truth and masters of self-discipline, are always an inexhaustible source of inspiration and exaltation. They open the eyes of the blind, impart strength to the weak, and instil faith and hope into the hearts that droop and despair. They hold up shining ideals before the youth, and illustrate the meaning and purpose of human existence. They are, therefore, particularly indispensable at the present moment when the consciousness of man is being degraded and darkened by some forms of literature which, in the name of realism, revel in uncovering the cesspools of human nature and filling our life with their noxious stench. It would, indeed, be a great national service to prepare readable biographies of the great sons of India, ancient and modern, and help create a taste in the mind of the youth of the country for all that is high and noble, difficult, yet pure and sublime—all that for which the India of Rama and Krishna, Buddha and Chaitanya, Ramakrishna and Sri Aurobindo has lived and laboured through the countless ages of her culture and civilisation. But, in order that such a venture may fully bear the desired fruit, I would recommend the preparation of such biographies—they should not be very sketchy—by men who have had some firsthand knowledge and experience of spiritual life, or who have at least been sincerely endeavouring to lead it. This will make a considerable difference, so far as the atmosphere of the books is concerned. An intellectual presentation of a spiritual life, however sensitive, however sympathetic, however brilliant it may be, cannot create the right atmosphere and evoke the right response in the reader. It appeals only to his mind, not to his soul.

RISHABHCHAND

¹ They have evidently overlooked the life of Buddha, which comes immediately after that of Zoroaster.

Riches Within Your Grasp (Bengali). By *Sripati Chakravarty*. Published by the author from Kalanavagram, Burdwan, Bengal. Price 8as. only.

This is a golden book for all who have fallen into the slough of despondence after failing in the battle of life. Are you unemployed? Are you suffering from want and privation? Are you afflicted by illness and disease? Does your future hold no prospects for you and you feel dejected and gloomy? Do not lose heart, here is a book which can throw a new light on your way. The author is a spiritually minded man, and asks all to turn to the Divine for help under all circumstances; but he does not hold the view that one must be a Yogin in order to succeed in life; ordinary men using their intelligence and will can do it. He gives many practical hints how to succeed in business. We can quote here some of his general remarks: "I can assume that after reading the book so far you have become convinced that you are not a slave of your *adrishta* (Fate), you can change your fate if you want to do so, and the manner in which you have practised to control your thought has by this time left only those thoughts in your mind which are conducive to health, simplicity, strength and prosperity. You have now understood that you can stand alone on your own legs, that you are no longer a creature of fate but you can create your own fate. Gradually you will realise that the will-power is clearly developing in you. You will also notice that all things that you earnestly desire are coming to you by themselves. Believe now with great firmness and unshakable faith that all the objects of your desire have already been possessed. Do not impair your power by desiring anything improper or unworthy. Many people have no clear idea how to go deep inside and seek power from the Atman. Those who understand hypnotism know how an idea can be deeply impressed in the minds of others. By a similar process an idea can be deeply impressed in one's own mind. No one can become truthful or saintly in one day; no one can throw away completely his old *samskaras* in one day, but we have to make our life faultless little by little through a long effort. Don't bother about evil things. Begin with the thought of good things. You cannot reach your ideal, you are breaking your limbs by falling again and again, still there is no cause for fear or despair. Clearly grasp the idea that a great power is continually helping, is always ready to give more help and that you can achieve the impossible. You will notice now that the more you fix in your mind the thing that you want, the more the circumstances become favourable for attaining it. There are many ways of this self-development. One gentleman has written about his own experience. He writes: I sit in some lonely place with a pure thought, Then

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I throw away from my mind all undesirable thoughts. Gradually I forget my age, my condition, all my outward circumstances. Then I think of my true self in this manner: I am a portion of the Universal Shakti, I am united with that Shakti. I am a vessel of infinite power, infinite health, infinite riches. In the beginning, I used to do this sort of meditation for ten to fifteen minutes five or six times a day. Now by practice I can have this meditation at any place and at any time. I have also got immediate results. The way has been opened to me for acquiring wealth, health, ananda, peace, power, all this in an easy and simple way. He also says "I do not go to tempt people with this sort of work. I do not want to be a possessor of millions of rupees. I get much more than all that I need. I have no pride of learning, I am an ordinary educated man. Strong self-confidence, uncommon devotion to truth, complete self-dependence and high idealism—only these were my assets."

The author has given many examples from life how men have changed their destiny by their own effort. We can add here one example from history, that of Robert Clive. He rose from the position of a clerk under the East India Company and founded the British Empire in India. When Warren Hastings was appointed the first Governor-General, Clive wrote him a letter, giving him advice about his conduct in India. He told Warren Hastings "to set the public interest above all private claims, to trust his own judgment rather than that of others, to plan carefully and act daringly in time of danger, never to entertain a thought of failure till misfortune actually happened and even then to set to work upon new schemes with a conviction that time and perseverance would get the better of everything."

In support of the thesis put forward in the book we can quote from what Sri Aurobindo has written in *Synthesis of Yoga* about the power of concentrated will: "By concentration again the whole will can be gathered up for the acquisition of that which is still ungrasped, still beyond us; this power, if it is sufficiently trained, sufficiently single-minded, sufficiently sincere, sure of itself, faithful to itself alone, absolute in faith, we can use it for the acquisition of any object whatsoever; but we ought to use it not for the acquisition of the many objects which the world offers to us, but to grasp spiritually that one object worthy of pursuit which is also the one subject worthy of knowledge. By concentration of our whole being on one status of itself, we can become whatever we choose; we can become, for instance, even if we were before a mass of weaknesses and fears, a mass instead of strength and courage, or we can become all a great purity, holiness and peace

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or a single universal soul of Love." The great power which concentration gives should not be used for worldly objects for their own sake; but acquiring money or power for divine work is a part of spirituality. "Some even put a ban on money and riches and proclaim poverty and bareness of life as the only spiritual condition. But that is an error; it leaves the power in the hands of the hostile forces. To reconquer it for the Divine to whom it belongs and use it divinely for the divine life is the supramental way for the Sadhaka." Sri Aurobindo wrote a letter explaining how to succeed in business. Our author says that any one who reads his book will notice that it is nothing but an elaboration of this letter of Sri Aurobindo. We conclude by giving here the substance of this letter of Sri Aurobindo:

All difficulties will disappear when you will be able to dedicate wholly yourself, your work, your business to the Divine, when there will be no conflict within yourself. Generally men do work, do trade or business for gaining riches, fame and power, and for the joy of employing one's capacity, but success in work depends on their capacity, their nature, and the destiny created by their past good or evil actions. Realise fully (it is not sufficient to have only a mental idea or wish) that all life, all work belongs to the Mother, realise your intense joy in this dedication and self-surrender. As a result of this will come a steady contentment in the work, a great joy in the work, the joy that your capacities are being used for God's work. Realise also that the divine Power is working behind our action and conducting the work at every moment.

A firm faith is needed, a faith that will not be shaken by any event. If difficulties and obstacles arrive, they create no doubts in the mind, nor do they bring a tamasic inactivity. But this belief remains fixed that the divine Power will remove all obstacles, and with this faith there is a fuller turning towards that Power, a fuller trust and dependence on it. When the faith and the consecration are complete, there comes also the capacity to receive the divine Power. What exactly has to be done, what means has to be employed, that Power determines everything. Then circumstances also become favourable and the result is visible.

To reach this condition it is necessary always to keep up the aspiration and practise self-surrender. There must be the resolution to reject all obstacles that may arise within or around you. At the beginning, difficulties and obstacles will come inevitably. They will come as long as they are necessary for bringing about the required change, but if they are faced with firm faith, resolution and patience, they are bound to disappear.

A. B.

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